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AUTHOR	White, James L.
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ABSTRACT

Written for use in grades 3 through 6, this guide explains in simple terms the United States government's often unethical handling of treaties with the Ojibwe and small groups of Sioux during the early formation of the country. The first section presents a basic history of the Ojibwe and their reasons for migrating from the Atlantic to the upper Mid-west after the arrival of European settlers. The following section explains a treaty simulation activity for students in which they assume the roles of United States President, lumbermen, government agents, settlers, fur traders, and Sioux and some Ojibwe clan representatives. Suggestions are provided to help the teacher guide students through the treaty-making process, understand how the Ojibwe clans were underrepresented, and how procedures discriminated against the Indians, e.g., treaties were written only in English. A section of follow-up activities poses seven questions for study and discussion and provides sample answers. Questions concern fairness and the special interests of parties involved in the treaties. The guide includes four references for teachers and the text of an actual treaty: "Treaty with the Pillager Band of Chippewa Indians--1847." (JHZ)

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The making of a TREATY?!

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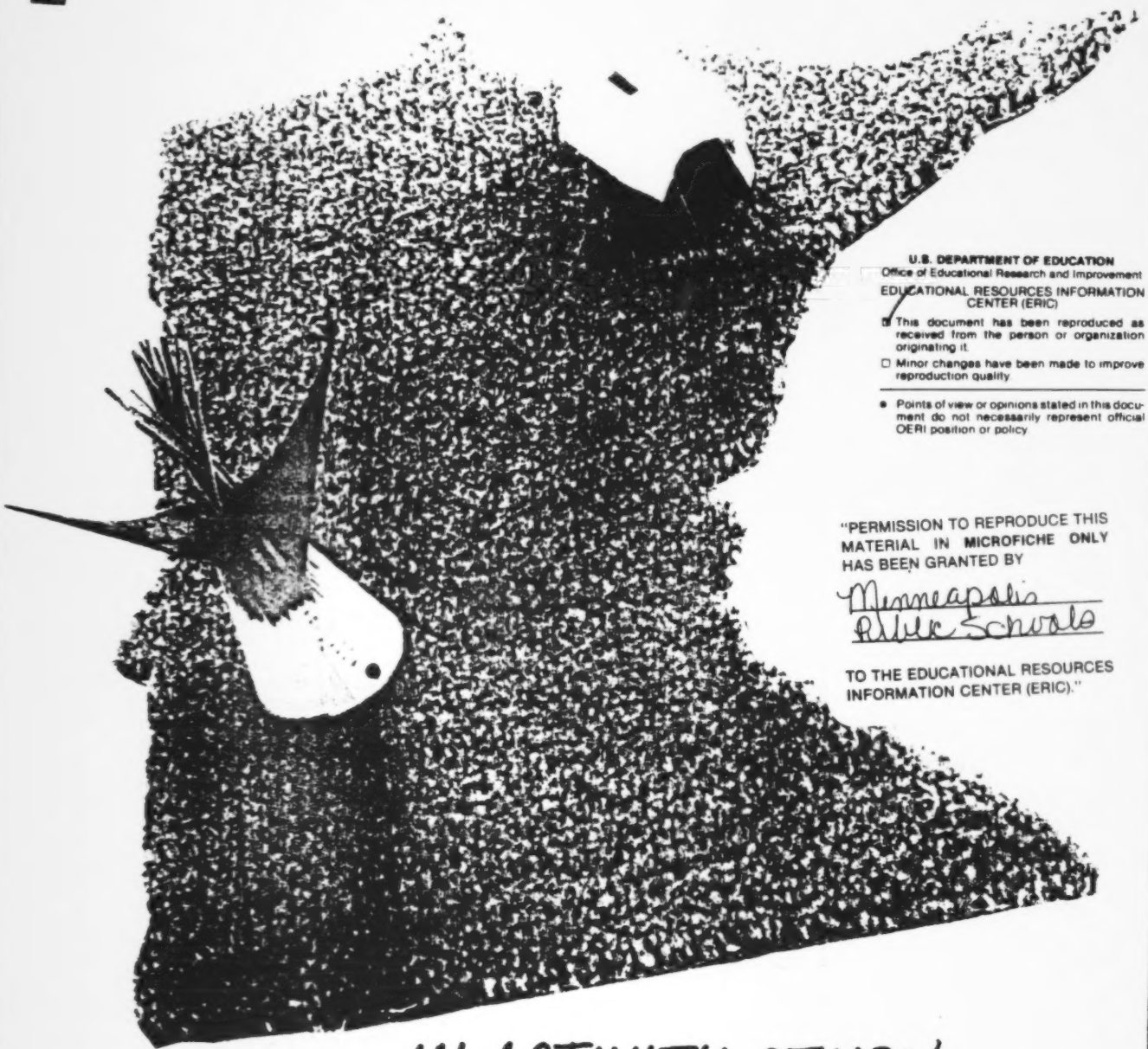

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AN ACTIVITY STUDY FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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OUTLINE

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Introduction for the Teacher

Much confusion has resulted in the discussion of treaty making by our government with the American Indians. The purpose of this study is to explain simply to grades three through six the often unethical handling of treaties with the Ojibwe and small groups of Sioux in the early formation of the United States. This study has been tested and well received in elementary schools in Minneapolis. This study uses a role playing technique for the students to dramatically illustrate the mishandling of treaties. Also the work is presented in a positive atmosphere. The obvious lesson is the Ojibwe people were most often not consulted about their land or given responsibility for their destiny. The Ojibwe believed what was said was the truth, and were seldom aware of the hidden agenda of other factions: the lumber barons, the fur traders, the government agents, and the settlers.

Further, this unit gives a richer appreciation of our Ojibwe culture, a brief explanation of our clan system, and some understanding of contemporary tribal life, and why we live where we do and how we have again assumed our own destiny. The Ojibwe divided their family groups into clans. Each clan has taken or been given an animal's name. They began with five original clans. Today there are many clans. Some say these are the first five: Loon, Wolf, Bear, Martin, and Bullhead.

Pre-study for students:

Some brief preparation on certain elements of Minnesota history will make this lesson more meaningful to your class. We suggest a map study of the United States will clarify the migration and final location of the Ojibwe in Minnesota. Show on the North American map the Atlantic Ocean (the Great Salt Sea), the St. Lawrence River, and the Great Lakes where the Ojibwe settled.

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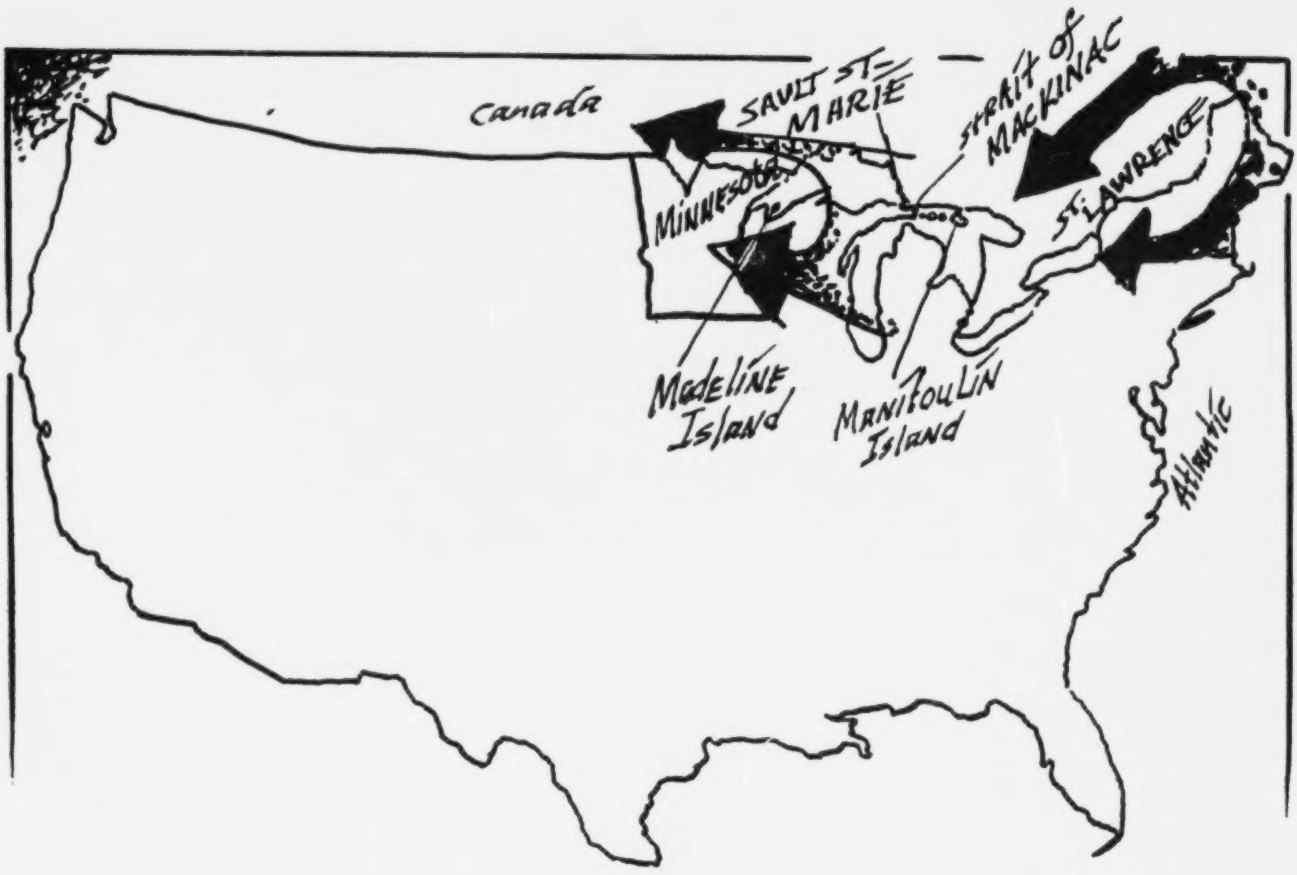

The Migration of the Ojibwe People for Teachers and Students

There were many reasons why we Ojibwe left our windy homes by the Atlantic Ocean. The entrance of the Europeans to North America brought one awe filled difference to us: CHANGE! What was, would never be again. The Ojibwe knew they had to survive in a different way. Being a very adaptable people they could use the European goods, so we traded beaver furs because we were good hunters. But the beaver stock diminished on the Eastern Coast. The Ojibwe then had to gather up lives and move to where the beaver were more plentiful. But the Ojibwe also moved for sacred reasons.

When we lived near the sea a giant religious shell called Megis appeared to the People rising above the water. The Ojibwe interpreted this sacred mystery as a message to leave the sea and find a new home. The great shell appeared four more times to help the Ojibwe with their journey: at the St. Lawrence River, at the first Great Lake, at Sault Ste. Marie and finally Madeline Island. The old ones must have heard again the sound of water against the shore of the Great Lakes at night and remembered the sound of the sea and called this their home.

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Another reason for our move to the upper Mid-West was of a more practical nature. We needed to go where hunting was good. Equally important, the Ojibwe were greatly admired for handsome beaver robes and beautiful quill work given to us from the porcupine and our beautiful buckskin and rabbit fur clothing helped us enjoy our long Minnesota winters. The European developed a trading system with us. Being a practical people, we wanted some of the things the Anglos possessed that would make our lives easier. We wanted iron: big iron pots to cook, utensils to cook with, guns for better hunting. Also we wanted beads from European traders to enhance our art work. But there were larger stakes to be gained than iron pots, beaver furs and a few bright beads.

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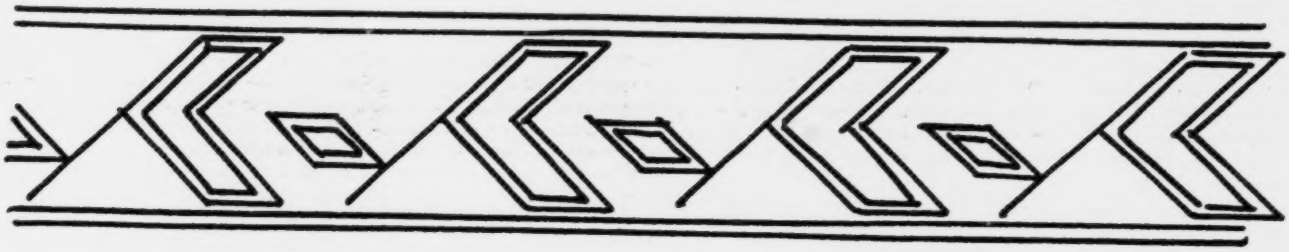
A Treaty Activity for Students

Now that the students have some basic history of the Ojibwe and how we came to Minnesota we can do our play activity.

First cut out the name tags that are drawn on white paper. (You may want to Xerox several copies of these sheets for future use.) Then paste them on a firm cardboard so they will hold up and put a string through the top so the students can wear them around their necks to be identified. The President, who is generally played by the teacher, directs the activities, but you may want a student to do the role. The other tags are for lumbermen, two government agents, settlers, fur traders, Sioux, and some Ojibwe clans. Each Ojibwe clan and Sioux tribe should be two or more in numbers. All this depends on the size of your class. Now we are ready to begin. After the students have been assigned their roles have a government agent say: "Ms. or Mr. President, there's some trouble in Minnesota!" The President tells the government agent to go to Minnesota and invite certain people back to Washington for a treaty conference. (Make sure the government agents deliberately leave out two or three Ojibwe clans!)

When the groups have assembled in Washington have them sit near a blackboard or large newspaper pad so the President can write the treaty. At this point have one clan member come to the meeting late because they were not notified in time. Have the government agent tell them to go back to their reservation, that everything has already been decided for them. Now ask non-Indian representatives first what they want in Minnesota. The lumber people will most likely ask for a lot of timber land. The settlers may ask for a lot of farming land. The President will write all this down then she or he will ask the few Ojibwe clan members what they want.



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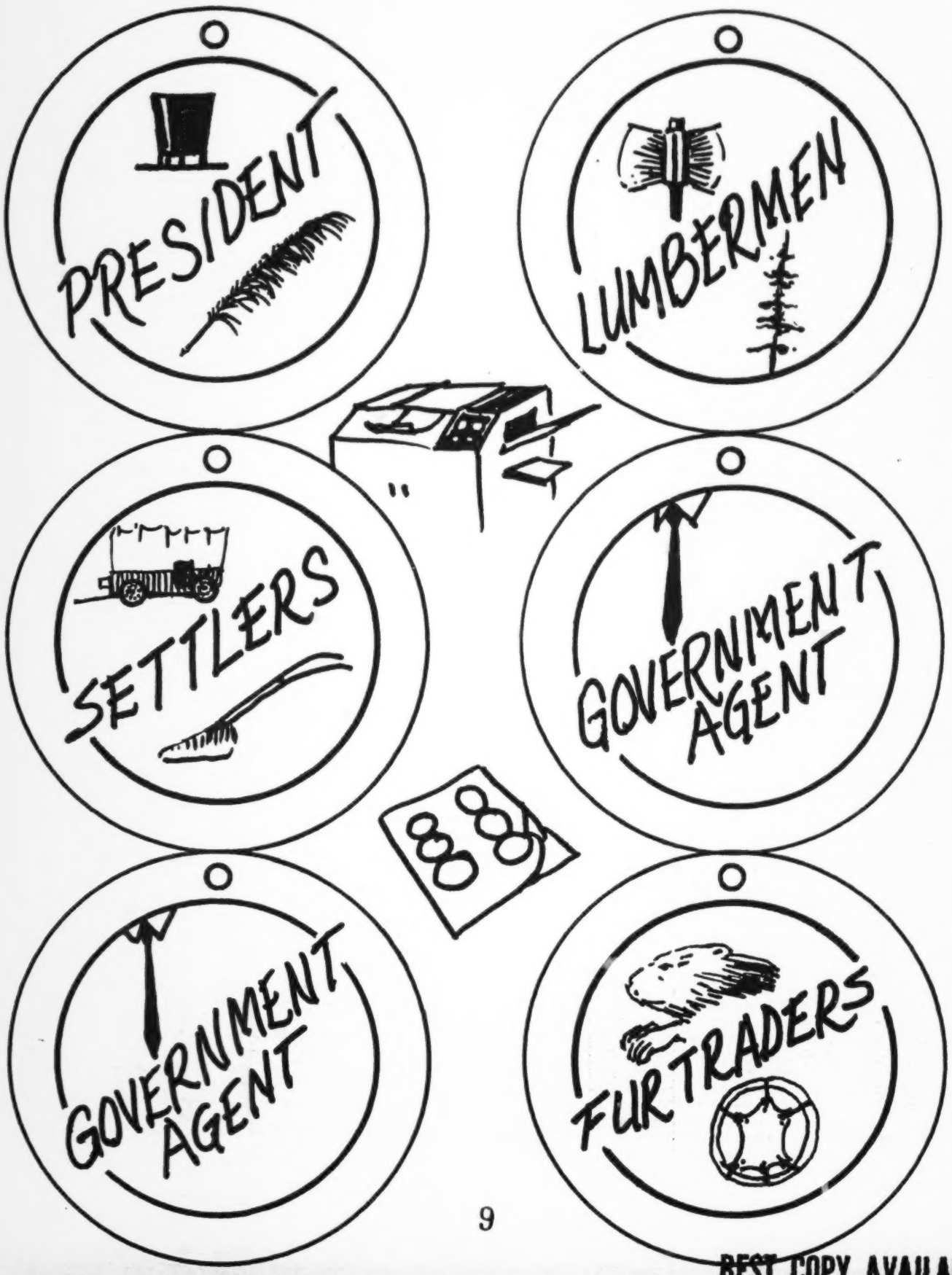

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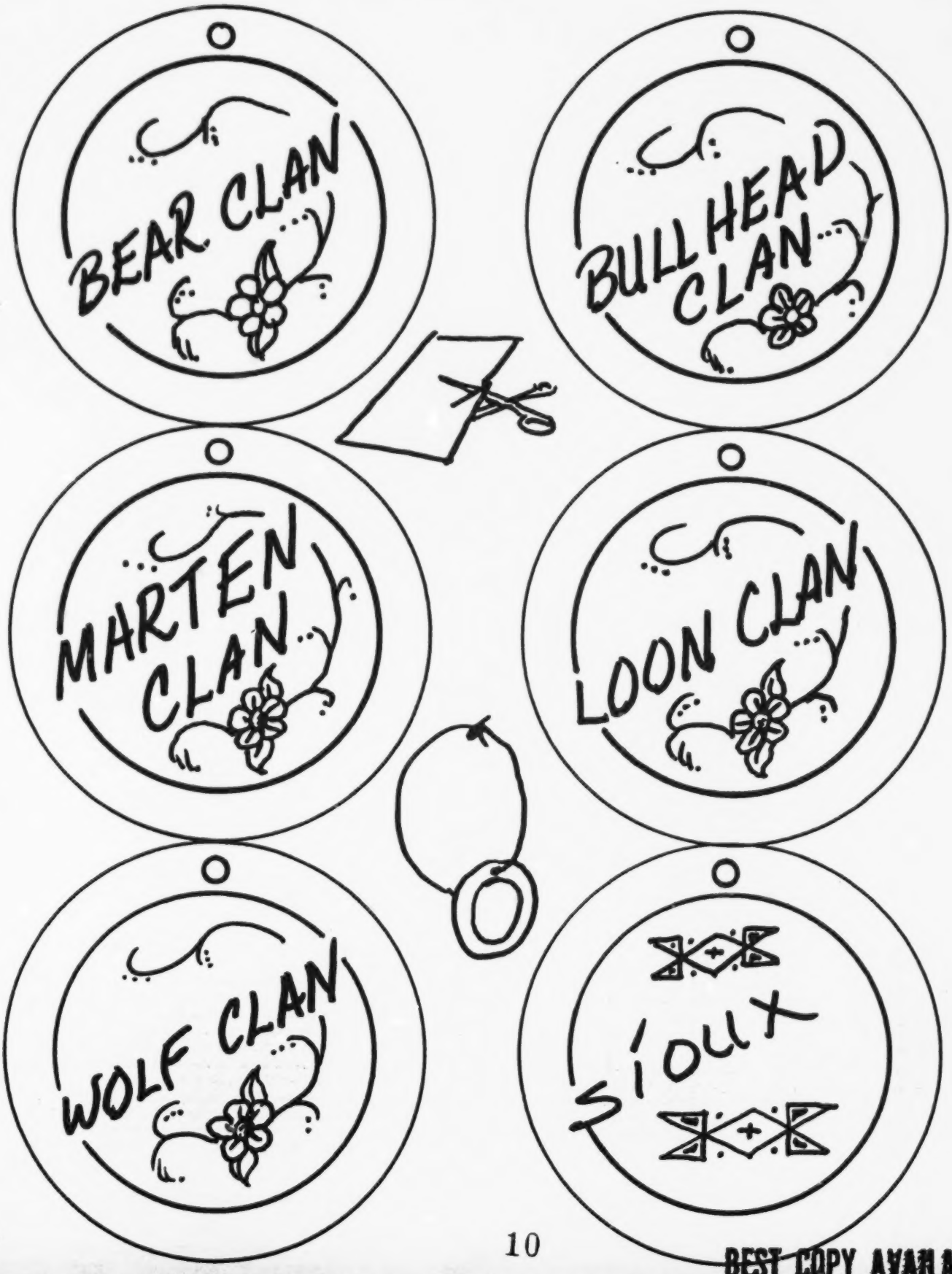

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After everything is written down the President asks the members to discuss how the natural resources of Minnesota can best be divided among themselves. We will see how the land was divided and today the Ojibwe people have seven reservations in Minnesota and the Sioux have four small communities. It will seem obvious with so few Indian clans present that there was little concern for the Ojibwe people. They should then decide among themselves what should be the proper payment for Indian land. Then have each non-Indian sign the treaty with their proper signature. Have the Indians sign with an "X". Make sure the students know the treaties were written only in English and the Ojibwe could not read English. Then dismiss the treaty council.

Now the President signs the treaty as follows:

"I may change this treaty at my pleasure."

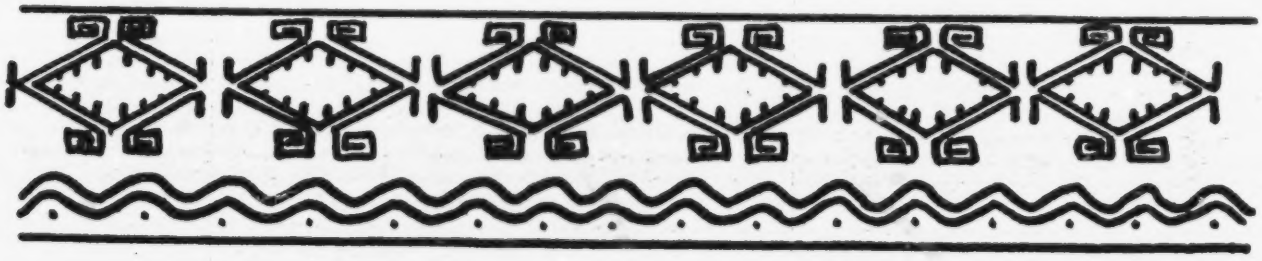
Signed,

The President*

By this time you should have some pretty unhappy students in class who didn't participate in activities. They will most likely tell you they didn't get to play. Then explain simply that this most often happened in actual history when treaties were made.

Conclusion

This unit is obviously greatly simplified for classroom use. The study of treaties is indeed a complex one. We hope this helps school children better understand this complicated process.



*See Schaaf and Rockwell, Treaty of 1837.

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Suggested Follow-Up Activities for Teachers and Students

1. What were some of the ways the government broke their treaties with the Indian people?

Answer: All the treaties with Indian people were broken in some way. Indians were promised land for hunting, wild rice, maple sugar and homes. Some of the land was set aside as reservations, then the land was opened to non-Indian homesteading. Few reservations have remained closed to non-Indians.

2. Why did not some Ojibwe people attend the treaty making councils?

Answer: Many of them were not invited. Some could not travel the great distances in a short period of time. Some of the Ojibwe refused to go to the councils as a way of protesting against what was happening to them.

3. Was the land of the Ojibwe and Dakota sold fairly to the People?

Answer: No. Often the land was sold for enormous profit by the government. For example, in the treaty of 1837 the land was bought by the government for 7¢ an acre and sold it immediately for $1.25 an acre to non-Indians.

4. Why did the lumberman take so much white pine?

Answer: They wanted to use it for building. Lumbermen of that period had no regard for the balance of nature. They thought the forests would last forever.

5. What were the main concerns of the settlers, lumbermen, fur traders, government agents and interpreters?

Answer: The settlers wanted to use the land for their families. The lumbermen wanted access to quantities of fine lumber to make more money quickly. The fur traders wanted unlimited access through areas of the fur bearing animals. They also wanted access to waterways and trading post. This of course was done to pay debts and make a money gain. All the agents were employees of the government. Many were dishonest and corrupt with Indian people and were concerned only for personal gain. All the interpreters were employees of the government. They were Indian and non-Indian. Some of them were corrupt, and others were not.

6. What were the concerns of the Indian people?

Answer: We were concerned about keeping our homeland. We wanted to live near where our ancestors were buried. We have a spiritual kinship with all creation as well as an economic relationship with the area. We used maple trees for sugar. Wild rice and game were used for food.

7. Why did the President reserve the right to change treaties?

Answer: He is the head administrator for the government. With this statement he reminds Indian people that he represents a stronger nation.

References for Teachers

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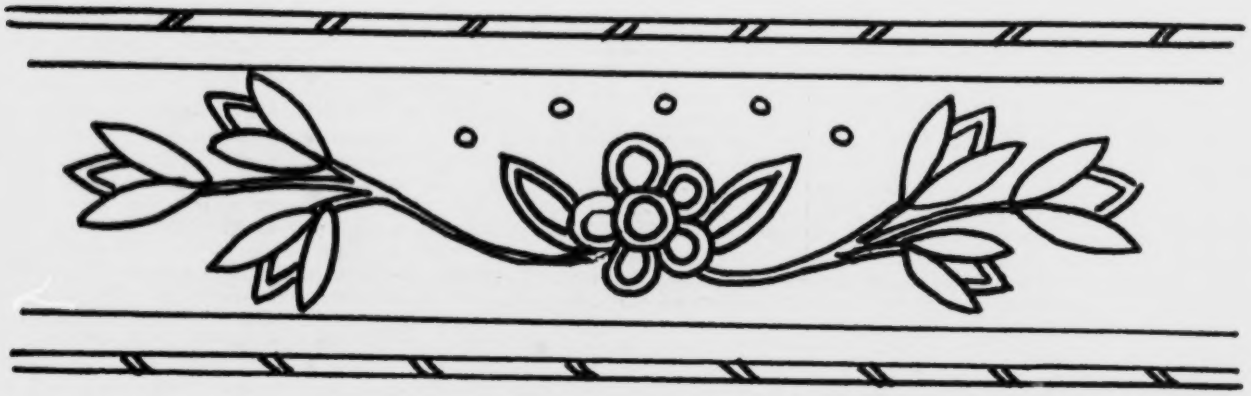

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(For your edification, we thought it would be helpful for students and teachers to see an actual treaty.)

TREATY WITH THE PILLAGER BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS. 1847.

Articles of a treaty made and concluded at Leech Lake on the twenty-first day of August, in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty-seven, between the United States, by their commissioners, Isaac A. Verplank and Henry M. Rice, and the Pillager Band of Chippewa Indians, by their chiefs, head-men, and warriors.

ARTICLE 1. It is agreed that the peace and friendship which exists between the United States and the Indians, parties to this treaty, shall be perpetual.

ARTICLE 2. The Pillager band of Chippewa Indians hereby sell and cede to the United States all the country within the following boundaries, viz: Beginning at the south end of Otter-Tail Lake; thence southerly on the boundary-line between the Sioux and Chippeway Indians to Long Prairie River; thence up said river to Crow Wing River; thence up Crow Wing River to Leaf River; thence up Leaf River to the head of said river; and from thence in a direct line to the place of beginning.

ARTICLE 3. It is stipulated that the country hereby ceded shall be held by the United States as Indian land, until otherwise ordered by the President.

ARTICLE 4. In consideration of the foregoing cession, the United States agree to furnish to the Pillager band of Chippewa Indians annually, for five years, the following articles: Fifty three-point Mackinaw blankets, three hundred two and a half point Mackinaw blankets, fifty one and a half point Mackinaw blankets, three hundred and forty yards of gray list-cloth, four hundred and fifty yards of white list scarlet cloth, eighteen hundred yards of strong dark prints, assorted colors, one hundred and fifty pounds three-thread gray gilling-twine, seventy-five pounds turtle-twine, fifty bunches sturgeon-twine, twenty-five pounds of linen thread, two hundred combs, five thousand assorted needles, one hundred and fifty medal looking-glasses, ten pounds of vermilion, thirty nests (fourteen each) heavy tin kettles, five hundred pounds of tobacco, and five barrels of salt. And the United States further agree that at the first payment made under this treaty, the Indians, parties to this treaty, shall receive as a present two hundred warranted beaver-traps and seventy-five northwest guns.

ARTICLE 5. This treaty shall be obligatory upon the parties thereto when ratified by the President and Senate of the United States.

In testimony whereof, the said Isaac A. Verplank and Henry M. Rice, commissioners, as aforesaid, and the chiefs, headmen, and warriors of the Pillager band of Chippewa Indians, have hereunto set their hands at Leech Lake, this twenty-first day of August, one thousand eight hundred and forty-seven.

Isaac A. Verplank.
Henry M. Rice.
George Bonja, Interpreter.

Aish-ke-bo-ge-Koshe, or Flat Mouth, first chief, his x mark.
Ca-pe-ma-be, or Elder Brother's Son, second chief, his x mark.
Nia-je-ga-boi, or La Trappe, head warrior, his x mark.
Ca-gonse, or Small Porcupine, headman, his x mark.
Pe-ji-ke, or the Buffalo, second warrior, his x mark.
Ca-ken-ji-wi-nine, or Charcoal, third warrior, his x mark.
Na-bi-ne-ashe, or the Bird that flies on one side, second headman, his x mark.
Ne-ba-coim, or Night Thunder, warrior, his x mark.
Chang-a-so-ning, or Nine Fingers, warrior, his x mark.

Witness: Goerge Bonja, Interpreter.
A. Morrison.
A. R. McLeod.
J. W. Lynde.

Research: Development

SALLY HUNTER

Writer

JAMES L. WHITE

Graphics

STEVE PREMO

Indian Education

Minneapolis Public Schools

Indian Education

Rosemary Christensen, Director

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